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CUNNING CHUCK.

A Christmas Story of Plantation Days



Old negro, the owner of a well cultivated farm, sat with a number of his grand-children in front of a blazing fire of hickory logs. Christmas time was drawing near and on the children's faces happy fancy had drawn pictures of bright eagerness. The old man had just put some sweet potatoes in the fire to roast when a boy said: "Gran'dady, tell us about er Christmas er long time ago, 'fo' de wah, w'en you wuz er slave."

"Huh! we had Chris'musses sho nuff in dem days, but I reckon da peered happier caze I wuz young at de time. I belonged ter er ole man named John Peter Thomas. He wa'n't er bad pusson, but he had er mighty heap o' cuis ways erbout him. I rick'lecks one Chris'muss in de specially. Ole marster he got inter trouble wid de church. He had been er mighty man in de congregation—furnished all de wood fur ter keep de house wa'm, an' ole m'istiss she mighty nigh allus baked de sackerment bread.

"One day de preacher—an' I neber did like de man, he wuz so stuck up—horrid marster's boss ter ride ter town, an' I reckon he muster got drunk er suthin', fur w'en he got back de boss wuz putty aigh dead, he had been runned so hard. Marster didn't like it er tall, an' he gunter talk ter de preacher er bout it, an' de preacher he talk sorter short, an' den marster whupped him, whupped him awful too. Wail, de church tuck it up, an' marster got inter er quarrel wid de head men an' bless yo' hearts, da turned marster out. It tickled de niggers, but you better blebe da soon gunter laugh on de yuder side da mouths. Ole marster he loved dat he wuz done wid 'ligien—dat he wa'n't eben gwine ter keep Chris'muss. Dis made us look powerful blue, I tell you. We had been in de habit o' restin' an' 'joyn' ourse's fur er whole week. All we'd hatter do wuz ter git up er nuff wood ter last er week, an' den we'd be ez free ez birds. We'd roam ober de country an' ketch rabbits, an' hunt possums at night an' hab dances wid de gals, an' jes' hab er high time all round. But all dis wuz gwine be stopped. De ole man wuz gwine make us work all through de Chris-muss.

"Dar wuz er sort o' Guinea nigger libed in de cabin next ter mine. He



THE CHRISTMAS STORY TELLER.

wuz er mighty funny pusson, an' da called him Chuck. Well, after we found out de thing had dun been settled an' dat we wa'n't gwine ter git no Chris-muss, I went inter Chuck's cabin one night ter greave wid him as I had dun greaved wid all de yuders. Chuck he wuz er settin' by de fire makin' ar cross bow.

"'What you gwine do wid dat?' says I.

"'Shoot rabbits wid it durin' de Chris-muss,' says he.

"'W'y, doan you know dat ole marster ain't gwine gin us no Chris'muss?' 'No, I doan know dat.'

"'Wail, it's time you wuz er findin' out.'

"'Oh, no 'tain't. Ole mars thinks he ain't gwine gin us no Chris'muss, but he is.'

"'How you know?' 'Neber mine—suthin' dun been er whispurin' ter me.'

"'Yes, an' will whisper er long time 'fo' you shoot no rabbits wid dat ar cross bow durin' dis here comin' Chris'muss.'

"'All right, if you thinks so, hab it yo' own way, but I tell you dat dis is goin' ter be one de mos' joyable Chris-musses you eber seed.'

"'I doan know how it gwine come,' says I.

"'Oh, mobby not, but you ain't er very smart pusson, no how.'

"'I thought de Guinea nigger had dun los' his mine, an' I got up an' went ter my cabin an' lay down, mighty sorrerful.

"'De next day marster tole me dat he want me ter go up ter town wid him ter stan' berhine his cheer an' wait on him at de hotel table, er habit dat de white folks hab in dem days, an' I thought dat after we got out on de road I would hab er chance ter talk him outen dat 'eision dat he dun cum ter in de regards ter Chris'muss. But somehow I didn't hab de nerve ter mention it ter him ez we wuz gwine, an' den I 'lowed ter merso' dat I wail till we come back.

"'It wuz putty late in de night ez we rode toward home. Dar had been er little skiff o' snow, an' de yoth looked like er sheet dun been spread out on it. Every thing wuz so ghost-like dat I didn't see how he could git mad at me fur talkin' ter him, so I says, says I: 'Marster, Chris'muss will soon be yere, won't it?'

"'Hush yo' mouf,' says he; 'dar ain't no sicer thing ez Chris'muss. Dar uster be, but dar ain't now.'

"'I thought it wuz gwine keep on jes' ez it allus did,' says I.

"'Doan make no diffence whut you thought, an' mo'n dat, ef you say er nuther word on dat subject I'll make you git offen dis boss (I wuz ridin' berhine him) an' walk home.'

"You better blebe I hushed up. It wuz monstuss 'keery right er long dar, an' I woulder tuck er duck fit ef he hader made me git down.

"Wail, we turned off inter a skirt o' woods, an' rid er long whar de trees hung low ober de road. Putty soon I think my blood gwine ter freeze. Er voice frum it seemed like way up yander call out;

"'John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas.'

"'Whoa,' says ole mars. 'Who dat call me?'

"'John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas.'

"'Mussyful Lawd, who dat callin' me?'

"'sklamed de old man, an' he socked de spurs in de boss, an' erway he went down de road. Dar wuz er big bend in de road, an' marster kep' ridin' wid his head tuck down, an' not sayin' a word till we got roun' dat bend, an' den, jest ez he gunter talk ter me in or skeered sort o' way, yere come de voice ergin. Dis time it say: 'John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas, you kain't run erway frum me. Stop.'

"You better blebe he stopped right dar in de road, er shakin' all ober.

"'John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas, wharfo you gwine treat dem po' culled folks so? I se got my eye on you, John Peter Thomas, an' you better

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The ladies are cordially invited and a large attendance of our people is earnestly requested.

It is desired that a board of trustees shall be elected and definite action taken towards organization and construction.

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7 a. m. 2 p. m. 8 a. m. 3:30 p. m.

9 a. m. 4 p. m. 10 a. m. 5:00 p. m.

11 a. m. 6 p. m. 12 a. m. 6:45 p. m.

The regular rates of the company are the amounts charged by the conductors. Tickets can be purchased at reduced rates by applying at the office of the company, the drug stores of Charles L